9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

in similar schools in 1938. Less than 40 per cent of the children between eight and eleven years old[1] are as yet in school in Rungwe District and the demand for places is enormous. Among the most insistent are girls wanting education. During the 1930's the Education Department was trying, with little success, to coax girls to stay in school long enough to learn to read and write, but today nearly a third of the primary school pupils are girls. A handful of boys and girls go out of the district to attend middle or secondary schools, and a few candidates for training as teachers and district nurses come in. Thus an educated person, or one who goes out to work, mixes with people whose backgrounds and languages are quite different from his own.

Then people are richer than they used to be, partly because of the wages earned abroad, and partly because of the coffee and rice grown and exported. There is also some employment within the district on tea estates (especially important to women and girls), and coal and vermiculite mines. The value of peasant crops exported has risen from about £24,000 in 1936[2] to nearly £578,000 from coffee and rice alone in 1955,[3] and some men have made as much as £150 from their coffee in a year. A coffee cheque of £30 to £60 is common. In addition to the peasant crops there is tea from estates—well over a million pounds of made tea in 1955 as well as a quantity of seed. This increase in wealth has involved a change in the division of labour. Because men are not at home to clear and hoe, their wives, perforce, must clear fields and hoe for themselves, assisted by their young sons, boys who twenty years ago would not yet have stopped herding.

There has been a rapid increase in population, more especially in the hills, due partly to the development of health services and

[1] Number of children in Mission and Native Authority schools in Rungwe District, 1955:

Boys	Girls	Total	No. of children 8-11 years of age (estimated at 10% of total population)
6,592	2,054	8,646	23,639
Middle Schools			
718	73	791	(This total does not include those who are in middle schools *outside* the District, nor does it include those following a professional course *in* the District)

(Figures provided by the courtesy of the Provincial Education Officer, Mbeya.) Change in Ngonde is not discussed for it was not possible to visit that area in 1955.

[2] *Good Company*, p. 16.

[3] Calculated from figures kindly supplied by the District Commissioner, Mr. Peter Johnston.

less uncultivated. These areas can easily be picked out today by the absence of village sites and banana groves. There was something of a rush to grab land in such areas and in the less densely populated parts of the chiefdoms. Today in my personal experience – for no general survey has been attempted – there remains little or no unused land within the paddy-growing region which can, by native techniques, be brought under the plough; and indeed men are attempting to grow paddy on unsuitably raised land where inundation is inadequate. Communal cattle pastures have shrunk as arable holdings extended until they remain only where cultivation is profitless.

The demand for land has far outrun the physical supply, and in 1955 it still seemed to be insatiable. The initial cycle was that a desire for more money to permit of a higher standard of living created a demand for more land on which to produce more cash crops; but the increased level of income then further stimulated money demands to raise standards higher again, thus bringing a renewed demand for land. The cycle has now been halted by the lack of further land to meet the people's needs, but the demand remains nevertheless and is indeed increased by rising costs of living.

This economic picture is, of course, oversimplified, but it may serve to illustrate the nature of forces at work in the situation. I would not wish to overemphasise the snowball effect, for the bulk of the population remains still largely content with only a little over earlier standards; but increasing numbers of men and their families are coming to seek something better. Bicycles have become something of a general necessity; a variety of good clothing and shoes is considered quite essential. Only a single decade before the Nyakyusa women still generally went about in the traditional nudity, whereas in 1955 they must have ranked among the very best-dressed African women in the Territory. European-type household goods, crockery and utensils are common. The demand for money, that is for a higher standard of living, has also been greatly stimulated by the experiences of the thousands of labour migrants returning from southern towns and mines, and by the cash and goods they bring back with them.[1]

It is not possible for me to attempt to suggest what a desirable acreage would be for a contemporary Nyakyusa, because money demands, crop yields and selling prices change and the desire for higher standards of living also alter as the potentialities of the new cash economy are increasingly understood. In 1954 the approximate average of Sh.200/- per paddy cultivator was earned from perhaps two or three acres of arable land, but an indeterminable amount of the crop was kept back for home food requirements. As will be shown later many men's paddy fields could have been little more than an acre, and many men, specifically young men, had no paddy land at all. Certainly there were few who held what they considered, at a reasonable estimate, to be sufficient land.

This universal cash crop agriculture and the continuing demand for higher standards of living, and therefore for higher money incomes, is the real cause of the new and rather sudden pressure of population on the land. Of course this economic process operates within a situation of relatively dense population and in a peasant community where land is almost the only form of capital and alternative enterprise is small. The gradual increase of population, although probably small, further aggravates the difficult situation.

Arable Holdings

It was not possible to obtain adequate, satisfactory data to allow the calculation of local population densities, and the detailed results of the 1948

1. In Gulliver, P. H.: 1957, an estimate of the cash income of Nyakyusa in 1954 is given at pp. 51-2. Data on the cash brought back by returning labour migrants are given at p. 55.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Census have never been issued.[1] However in some sample villages I very roughly measured arable holdings, and my results provide new information even though they can be illustrative only of the modern situation.

In each of the eight villages chosen[2] the arable holdings of *all* the adult male members (whether at home or away at work at the time) of the whole village, or occasionally of a distinct section of it, were measured by the simple and rough method of pacing the borders of every separate plot and converting the resultant figures into yards and thus to acreages. The actual pacing was done entirely by myself in order to try to maintain an even stride on all occasions, but in each village I was well supported by a team of four or five villagers, always including the headman and his assistants. The figures obtained relate only to arable holdings and bear no determinate relation either to crop yields or to non-arable land in the villages concerned. The results are summarised in Table III below.

TABLE III

ARABLE HOLDINGS IN EIGHT VILLAGES

Village and chiefdom	*No. of land-holders*	*Average holding in acres*	*No. of men holding more than:—* 5 *acres*	10 *acres*	*Average size of plots in acres*
Kapugi Mwamasangula ..	59	3.2	11	1	1
Ikolo Mwakyusa ..	68	3.0	13	0	1.2
Matema Mwakilasa	50	1.9	4	1	0.6
Lugombo Koroso ..	24	1.6	2	0	0.6
Mpunguti Mwakipesile ..	63	1.5	1	0	0.5
Kapugi Koroso ..	60	1.3	1	0	0.4
Lusonjo Mwakilasa	12	1.3	0	0	0.6
Busoka Mwantipulo	36	1.0	0	0	0.4
	372 men		32 men (8.6%)	2 men	

From this Table it can be seen that in the chiefdoms of Koroso and Mwakipesile, *in the villages concerned*, the average holding per man was about one and a half acres – and my impression was that in the southern parts of Lazarus's chiefdom and elsewhere immediately surrounding the lake shore similar conditions existed. It may be noted too that in these cases there were large numbers of young men without holdings at all. On the other hand, in the selected villages in the chiefdoms of Mwamasangula and Mwakyusa, the average holdings were about twice as large – three acres; and fewer young men were landless. Note also the cases of the villages in the chiefdoms of Mwantipulo and Mwakilasa in the more northerly parts of the Lake Plains, where the average holdings were one and 1.3 acres respectively, and where yet there was arable land unused and available. In those parts paddy cultivation is very limited because of the higher and hilly country, and the people remain little more than subsistence farmers – perhaps they may be taken as not unlike the traditional, pre-European subsistence cultivators.

Unfortunately I am unable to relate these figues of arable holdings to the total land available in each village, for this would have required survey work beyond my competence. Non-arable land is utilised for village sites with banana groves, roads and paths, pasturage, etc.; but the position is further complicated by varying amounts of unusable land in my sample villages. To give only two examples: within the boundaries of Mpunguti village, Mwakipesile's chiefdom, there are many acres of land adjacent to the Mbaka river which today are unusable because of deep flooding from

1. Population figures of any kind are not available even for the separate chiefdoms, let alone for ecological areas.

2. Their approximate locations are indicated on the accompanying sketch-map.

311
233 Whereas in the Highland and Central regions the large numbers of cattle – in relation, that is, to the available pasture resources – are causing over-grazing and soil erosion, particularly in the hilly areas so often nowadays relegated to pasturage, on the other hand in the flood plains there does not appear, at least to the layman, to have been any serious effects on the land. [241] The natural manuring of the paddy fields in the dry season is advantageous. In the Lake Plains it is the cattle rather than the land which suffer, but so far the Nyakyusa have done virtually nothing to meet the new conditions, other than to complain bitterly and fruitlessly.

The Young Men: Land Shortage and Labour Migration

423 The younger Nyakyusa men find increasing difficulty in obtaining arable land now that there are no longer vacant areas to be taken up, and the older men are no longer prepared to cede their land rights in favour of the younger generation, as they traditionally did. When occasional fields are left vacant, the young men must take their turn with their elders, who themselves are so chronically short of land – and the headmen commonly favour the older villagers with families as against the younger men. This means that in the high-density regions the majority of men under the age of about 30 years have little or no arable land, nor can they hope for it until the deaths of their fathers. In the congested village sites even their banana plots may be smaller than is desirable for the provision of the staple food.

[593] The young man, then, is compelled to remain dependent on his father's
[178] and elder brother's holding; indeed, headmen often justify their refusals to allocate plots to young men on the express grounds that the latter must share their elders' fields. Thus the valued independence of the young Nyakyusa is severely restricted and it seems that tensions and difficulties are beginning
[578] to arise between fathers and sons, and between brothers, because of this. Sons are blamed for not doing their fair share in the family cultivation; fathers are blamed for giving their sons inadequate shares in crops and crop incomes. It will be remembered that one of the fundamental principles underlying Nyakyusa society and its age-village organisation is the spatial segregation of parents and children (*cf.* page 22). Now they are inevitably being put into competition with one another over inadequate fields in a single holding.

[434] The young men are severely restricted, if not altogether cut off, from the
[343] opportunity to cultivate paddy in their own fields and thus to earn their incomes at home, for paddy-growing is the only way of earning a living in the Lake Plains. Yet it is these younger men whose money demand is greatest; to buy clothing, bicycles and other store-goods, and to buy cattle for marriage payments. They are therefore strongly attracted by the ready opportunities for taking up wage-labour abroad, in the mines of the Rhodesias and South Africa where wages are high (see Gulliver, 1957).

With the best will in the world, when, as in the very high-density region, the average holding is little more than an acre and a half – when, that is, the older men themselves desire larger acreages for their own cultivation needs – it is not possible for a father to allow his son to take large shares in his fields. In some cases a father does give outright to his adult sons strips of his holding, but plots so provided are necessarily small. Quite as frequently a father does not consider it possible to break up his holding in his own lifetime, and sons are expected to assist in the common cultivation and to con-
[593] tinue merely to be given a share in the family proceeds at harvest. It is not
[167] surprising, therefore, that very large numbers of young men from the Lake Plains migrate abroad to work. Only about one man in 20 has not been away at all before the age of about 25 years. Much higher proportions of men and larger numbers absolutely are temporarily absent from the Lake

438 north. Before the war, the goldfields gave work
316 to about 15,000 natives, chiefly Wanyakyusa,
[464] and most of the foodstuffs from this district went there. The goldfields are gradually closing due to difficulties in obtaining spares, and it has been necessary to look for outlets for Tukuyu produce elsewhere. Should the goldfields open again after the war, and large-scale mining start, there is a great future for produce grown in Tukuyu.

● 434 The main income of the tribe is derived from agricultural, military, mining and public works sources, and it is estimated that in 1941 the average annual income per man, woman and child was about Sh. 10 per year. It has risen considerably since, as over 4,000 men have joined the military and a large part of their salaries comes back to the district in the form of remittances. The agricultural source, from which a larger part of the tribal income
[464] accrues, is from sales of rice, maize and other foodstuffs. A fair number of Wanyakyusa also work on the tea plantations.

241 The picture sketched above will show that the district is inhabited by a tribe whose agriculture is of great interest, since the variety of crops, from wheat in the highlands to paddy and cotton on the lake shore, is perhaps unrivalled in so small an area elsewhere in
181 East Africa. It has not been possible to fill in the picture with details of the people's character, but it is worth mentioning that the Wanyakyusa are a people difficult to administer, argumentative, litigious, self-willed and at times inclined to truculence. Nevertheless their intelligence is such that they are
153 willing to be persuaded, and, once convinced of the benefit of any change, adopt it with energy. This is instanced by the way they have in a few years accepted the principles of anti-erosion to such an extent that now there is perhaps 90 per cent control in the well-populated areas. It should, however, be stressed
134 that, though the soil is not being eroded to
241 any great extent, it is still being impoverished, since increased cultivation for the war effort has involved breaking a great deal of new land with a consequent lessening of fallow. Over-cropping in the hilly country is very great and, in order to prevent further emigration, it be-
[185] hoves the native planters to learn to put something back into the soil in the form of mulch or compost. If care is not taken, a comparatively prosperous country will one day become like so many parts of Africa, where a losing struggle is fought with Nature to obtain a sufficiency for the people's needs.

on 21st September, 1943)